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<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>The aim of this study, The Other Half of My Body: Coming into Being in Rural Bangladesh, is to bring fertility practices under a close scrutiny, based on ethnographic research. The study shows how reproduction is simultaneously encompassing the impact of the population policy -- influenced by the international community of development agencies -- and the local symbols and metaphors, and the symbolic acts of conception, contraception, and childbirth as presented inside a micro-community.</p> <p>The anthropological fieldwork was conducted and completed in Bangladesh, in the village of Mayapara between the years 1995 and 1998, with the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods.</p> <p>The methodologies and analyses used in the studies of Bangladeshi women have represented them as a single category within a narrow focus in seclusion subordinated by marriage, as well as in relation to property and employment, but not in the context of a broader social process. In Ortner's (1994, 1996,2) words we can say that studies on Bangladeshi women have seen them from a structuralist-determinist point of view, where human action is constrained by the given social and cultural order and system, whereas less attention has been given as to how these are produced, reproduced, and challenged in practice.</p> <p>In this study, I have used the perceptions of procreation and fertility practices as an entry point for studying the social life i.e. how local culture is produced and whether and how it is contested, but also how people perceive and make possible the creation of the next generation. The focus of this study has been to find out how the cultural construction of fertility and health, and, especially, the reproductive health, mediate the relationship between sex and gender. Despite the complexity of the term "reproduction," I have focused on the specific subject of human reproduction that encompasses all stages of human life and, especially, the female life cycle: the perception of fertility and conception, as well as the issues of pregnancy and childbirth - all entailing much more than a mere biological reproduction.</p> <p>Kinship, as a symbolic and culture specific domain, incorporates the notions of gender and religiousness. All these have been investigated through perceptions of procreation as well as those of coming into being in the village of Mayapara. In the local discourse, fertility is not conceptualized as a wholly natural phenomenon but, rather, as a capacity of a person that has to be socially augmented. The meaning of the body and its procreative substances and fluids are intimately related to the speculation of procreation and coming into being. By situating fertility, its practices and perceptions, I have aimed to show that there is no universal Islamic thought residing in an episteme that would link the female and male correspondences with the monogenetic theory of procreation. The theories and perceptions are culture specific and in Mayapara, in the local speculations of procreation, neither the man nor the woman are seen to be the creative and engendering agent alone without the other, but both partners are equally needed, encompassing each other.</p> <p>The dialogues of women in the rural Bangladesh touch upon multiple domains: work, family relationships, lived tradition, and current family planning discourses. I suggest that, in a way, the Bangladeshi women have occupied a median position between the modernity and tradition of the birth culture. They negotiate and come into terms with both and they are able to choose the aspects of tradition and modernity that best suit their circumstances and render their lives dynamic -- not static, as is often claimed. Whereas women use traditional methods with herbs and rituals to enhance fertility and rely on the village midwives to conduct the deliveries, the practice of birth control is mainly based on the culture of modern birth-control methods due to the widespread National Family Planning Program.</p>		
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